

Validating Voices

By: Haley Hastings – Domestic Violence Advocate

Dealing with the stress and trauma caused by a domestic violence can be very difficult for a survivor, especially when they are lacking a strong support system. Being in a domestic violence relationship may have caused isolation from their support system, leaving the survivor with no one to turn to in times of crisis. For so long the people suffering in these relationships have been told their feelings are unimportant, they are too sensitive, and they are overreacting. When constantly told these things we begin to believe it. Self-doubt and fear others will not believe them will also deter someone from sharing their experiences with another person. Reaching out for support during, or after a domestic violence relationship, can be very intimidating for survivors.

For someone filling the role of support person, it can be just as intimidating. If you know someone who has been, or is currently involved in, a domestic violence relationship and they reach out to you, it is important to remember a few key things. First, the individual may not be ready to share every detail of their experience with you. That being said, it is very important to emphasize that you will be a listening ear for them when they are ready to share their experience. Second, be prepared to just listen. As human beings our first instinct when we see someone is upset is to fix the problem right away. Instead, when someone is sharing a piece of their story with you, they might just need validation. Third, know the resources that are available to survivors of domestic violence. You may not know exactly how to help the survivor, but knowing places he or she can contact during their journey is a good start.

SafeCenter is a non-profit agency whose vision is for all individuals to experience the right to be free from violence. Their mission is to build comprehensive and sustainable community strategies to eliminate domestic and sexual violence in Clinton and Shiawassee Counties. For more information regarding services, contact SafeCenter at 1-877-952-7283 or via email at safecenter@thesafecenter.org